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ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Review of the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The General Assembly, by its decision 46/431 of 17 December 1991, requested the Economic and Social Council to review at its regular session of 1992 the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit of the United Nations Secretariat. To assist the Council in its review, the present report describes the functions of the Unit and provides information on its activities and on the resources allocated to it.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The consultative relationship of the Economic and Social Council with non-governmental organizations is based on Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides that "the Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned". The arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations are presently governed by Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

2. The organizational unit mandated to assist the Economic and Social Council in the implementation of Article 71 of the Charter by providing substantive support to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and implementing the consultative relationship was the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. The Unit was initially based in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, subsequently renamed the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. Following the recent restructuring of the Secretariat, the Unit is now part of the Department of Economic and Social Development and located within its Interorganizational Coordination and Cooperation Branch, itself located within the Department's Economic and Social Council Affairs and Inter-Agency Coordination Division.

3. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, at its session held in 1991, strongly recommended an urgent review of the grave situation in respect of staff resources of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit, in view of the ever-expanding volume of documentation as well as the constant increase in the number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status and the resulting increase in demands placed upon the Unit (E/1991/20, para. 44). The concerns expressed by the Committee regarding the situation of the Unit - which were reaffirmed during the first regular session of 1991 of the Economic and Social Council (see document E/1991/SR.7) and during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, at both the 27th meeting of the Third Committee (see document A/C.3/46/SR.27, paras. 8-10, 13, 16, 20 and 21) and the 21st meeting of the Fifth Committee 1/ - resulted in the adoption by the General Assembly of decision 46/431.

4. The functions of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit, which are based on Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations and on Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) can be divided into three main components, namely, (a) acting as substantive secretariat of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and of related meetings including preparation of all required documentation, (b) assisting the Committee and the Council in ensuring the full implementation of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) on arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations and (c) acting as a focal point within the United Nations Secretariat for the provision of advice and information to Secretariat officials, the United Nations system, States Members of the United Nations and outside users, with

regard to non-governmental organizations. From time to time the Unit is also called upon to provide services to ad hoc international conferences and meetings related to the contribution and participation of non-governmental organizations.

5. Activities carried out under each component are described in section I of the present report. Section II describes how the Unit workload has increased over the years and how resources have failed to keep pace with the increase in responsibilities. The final section draws conclusions and proposes ways to ensure the effective functioning of the Unit.

I. FUNCTIONS OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS UNIT

A. Substantive secretariat of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

1. Servicing the regular sessions of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

6. The Unit is responsible for all the documentation required by the Committee as follows:

(a) Provisional annotated agenda

7. The Unit is responsible for drafting the annotated agenda in consultation with the Committee's Bureau.

(b) Reports on applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification submitted by non-governmental organizations

(i) Applications for consultative status

8. The Unit, before formally submitting an application to the Committee, must proceed with a painstaking critical reading of applications to ensure that the non-governmental organizations fulfil the criteria of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). This gives rise to lengthy correspondence and consultation especially when the applicants do not concur with the Unit's assessment as to their suitability for consultative status. In addition, the Unit advises organizations on procedures and, at the final stage of the process, is obliged to assist the applicants, especially those from non-English- or non-French-speaking countries, in the redrafting of the application to ensure consistency and clarity of presentation. The Unit verifies that the replies in the questionnaire are corroborated in the supporting documentation (publications, reports and statutes, for example). The Unit also must ascertain through lengthy investigations, all of which require extensive correspondence and persistent follow-up, any claims by the applicants of cooperation with United Nations Secretariat offices, and programmes, bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as well as with any intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations. Since

the task of screening applications often involves complex political and legal questions of a sensitive nature, the Unit staff is required to keep abreast of developments in that regard. In addition, when the non-governmental organization requesting consultative status is a national one, the Unit must proceed with consultations with the Member State concerned, as required by the Economic and Social Council in paragraph 9 of resolution 1296 (XLIV).

9. Although the documentation is to be made available to the Committee six weeks in advance, in practice it becomes available only shortly before the session. As a consequence, the Unit has been required by the Committee to undertake the additional task of preparing in advance for the information of the Committee members a compilation of excerpts on each organization applying for consultative status, so as to enable those members to be in a position to consult with their capitals sufficiently in advance of the session. Other interested member States often request such advance information.

10. The Unit must also deal between sessions with the non-governmental organizations requesting consultative status by virtue of a similar relationship with a specialized agency or a United Nations body, in accordance with paragraph 19 of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). Following the 1991 session of the Committee, the Unit dealt with 15 such requests, which at the time of the preparation of the present report, brought the total number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to 943.

(ii) Requests for reclassification

11. The Unit must provide the history of each organization seeking reclassification in order to ascertain the accuracy of the information it supplies in support of its claim to placement in a higher category.

(iii) Other reports

12. In addition, the Unit prepares reports on deferred applications and deferred requests for reclassification as well as a report on the follow-up to the decisions taken by the Committee at its previous session.

(c) Reports on quadrennial reports of activities of non-governmental organizations in categories I and II

13. Pursuant to resolution 1296 (XLIV), subparagraph 40 (v), non-governmental organizations in categories I and II are requested to submit to the Committee every fourth year a report on their activities. This involves considerable work for the Unit: revision of the guidelines for submission of reports in order to take into account the Committee's decisions, drawing up of the list of non-governmental organizations required to report and mailing to all relevant non-governmental organizations. Once the reports are received, a great deal of correspondence and consultation with the non-governmental organization concerned is needed to ensure conformity of the reports with the format required by the Committee. Basic editing of material (checking

accuracy, inter alia, of acronyms and references) is done by the Unit. After the reports are submitted in document form, there is a considerable amount of follow-up with the editors and translators. In addition, the Unit is responsible for the report on the follow-up to the decisions taken by the Committee at its previous session concerning the provision by a number of non-governmental organizations that had failed to submit a satisfactory report of additional information on their activities.

(d) Reports on review of future activities

14. The Unit is responsible for any reports that the Committee may require under this item. For example, for 1993 the Unit is responsible for two reports, on the 1991 and 1992 annual informal consultations, as well as for the report of the Working Group established by the Committee at its 1991 session.

(e) Report of the Committee to the Economic and Social Council

15. The Unit is responsible for drafting the substantive parts of the report. The Unit works closely with the Rapporteur and clears the report in consultation with the concerned members of the Committee.

16. The Unit is also responsible for the follow-up to decisions of the Committee. Immediately after the Committee's session, individual letters are sent to all non-governmental organizations that requested consultative status to inform them of the Committee's recommendations. The Unit receives a great number of inquiries in this regard from Governments, non-governmental organizations and the media. Once the report of the Committee is adopted by the Economic and Social Council, the Unit notifies the non-governmental organizations concerned of the decision taken by the Council on the recommendations of the Committee. Files have to be established and mechanisms set in motion to enable non-governmental organizations to exercise their newly gained status. This involves updating of mailing lists and the directory of non-governmental organizations in consultative status, registering of their accredited representatives and updating of the Unit's files. Once again, the Unit must respond to many inquiries and requests for information from Governments, the Secretariat, non-governmental organizations and the media. It must also communicate the information to the non-governmental organization liaison officers in Geneva and Vienna in a timely manner. The same process is required for the Committee's recommendations and the Council's decisions regarding quadrennial reports.

17. Finally, the Unit is responsible for the issuance, as a document of the Economic and Social Council, of a new list of non-governmental organizations in consultative status in order to reflect the decisions taken by the Council. This requires a considerable amount of work including follow-up with editors and translators.

2. Servicing the meetings of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations held prior to the sessions of the Economic and Social Council

18. Pursuant to paragraph 25 (a) of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations holds a meeting before each session of the Council in order to consider requests by non-governmental organizations in categories I and II to be heard by the Council or its sessional committees. For the Unit, this involves sending communications to relevant non-governmental organizations and transmitting the agenda of the Council's sessions, drafting the conference room paper for the Committee, servicing the Committee's meeting, drafting the report to the Economic and Social Council and notifying the non-governmental organizations concerned of the Council's decision.

3. Annual consultation of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations with the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

19. Pursuant to the request of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in 1987 (E/1987/32, para. 55), the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit organizes an annual informal consultation between the Committee and the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. This involves the following: consultations with the Committee's members and the non-governmental organizations in consultative status to establish the list of topics to be discussed at the consultation, drafting of a working paper for the consultation, mailing of notification to Committee members and non-governmental organizations, substantive servicing of the consultation as well as acting as secretary for the meeting and consultation with the Committee and the non-governmental organizations regarding the draft report to the Committee.

4. Other meetings

20. The Unit is responsible for servicing any other meetings that the Committee may require. For example, the Committee, at its session in 1991, established a Working Group to prepare draft guidelines of a technical nature (see document E/1991/20, para. 49). This entailed an additional workload for the Unit, namely, substantive and technical servicing of the three meetings held by the Working Group, drafting of working papers and reports of the Working Group on its meetings, correspondence with Working Group members and involvement with ad hoc meetings of the Committee's Bureau on the matter.

B. Implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) on arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations

1. Servicing all such substantive and procedural requirements of non-governmental organizations as pertain to the exercise of consultative status

21. The Unit acts as central focal point for the non-governmental organizations in consultative status in their relations with intergovernmental bodies and with United Nations offices and programmes. This role includes the provision of substantive advice on procedures regarding participation in the activity of the Council and its subsidiary bodies and of other relevant intergovernmental bodies, and the responsibility for handling the issuance of written statements submitted by non-governmental organizations to the Council and its subsidiary bodies, ensuring that those statements are in conformity with the formal requirements of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) and proceeding with the consultations required by the Council in subparagraphs 24 (b) and 30 (b) of that resolution. The Unit must also be in a position to respond to non-governmental organizations' requests for information regarding United Nations activities and thus must keep abreast of developments, especially in regard to resolutions and decisions of United Nations bodies concerning non-governmental organizations. The Unit is often called upon to introduce non-governmental organizations to substantive offices where their expertise can be of practical use.

22. In addition, the Unit must spend a considerable amount of time on liaison work per se, for example, receiving visiting presidents and secretaries-general of non-governmental organizations, briefing them on the work of the United Nations and arranging briefing by other United Nations Secretariat officials. The Unit is also involved in consultations with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Secretariat regarding requests from non-governmental organizations for appointments with the Secretary-General or requests for a message from the Secretary-General to events organized by non-governmental organizations.

23. The Unit issues a calendar of forthcoming United Nations meetings open to participation of, or of special interest to, non-governmental organizations in order to enable those organizations to plan their activities well in advance of the meetings. The necessity of issuing the calendar stems from the fact that the Secretariat does not send to non-governmental organizations such notifications or invitations for meetings as are received by Governments, specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, nor does it send the provisional agenda of the Council to non-governmental organizations, as required by the Council in paragraph 20 of its resolution 1296 (XLIV). The calendar is thus the only means for non-governmental organizations to receive information regarding United Nations meetings. Establishing the calendar requires identifying the contact points for the different organs and defining the levels of participation authorized as well as determining the procedure required for access to those meetings.

24. The Unit is responsible for providing accreditation services to the non-governmental organizations. This involves updating of the yearly standard letter of accreditation and mailing of accreditation forms each year to all non-governmental organizations. The issuance of accreditations and processing of identification cards involve a great amount of paperwork since there is no limit on the number of representatives that each non-governmental organization can accredit: in many cases, non-governmental organizations accredit as many as 20 representatives, who must all come in person to the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit's office to fill out the required forms. The Unit must maintain accreditations files, including cards, lists and addressographs; maintaining all those files is extremely cumbersome and time-consuming as they must reflect a continuous stream of changes in address and in representation. In addition, the Unit maintains a directory listing each organization's headquarters and the name and address of its main representative in New York. It should also be noted that the accreditation process very often necessitates consultations and coordination with the Security and Safety Service of the Department of Administration and Management of the United Nations Secretariat and with the Protocol and Liaison Service of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Secretariat. The Unit is also involved in consultation and correspondence with the host country in order to facilitate the granting of visas to representatives of non-governmental organizations.

2. Assisting the non-governmental organizations in consultative status in the coordination of their activities

25. The Unit assists the non-governmental organizations in consultative status in coordinating their activities through (a) organization (including substantive and technical servicing) of the monthly coordination meetings of chairpersons of committees of non-governmental organizations, (b) technical servicing of the monthly meetings of 12 committees of non-governmental organizations, and (c) establishment of a monthly calendar of meetings of committees of non-governmental organizations. The Unit acts as liaison between the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (CONGO) and participates in, and provides substantive backstopping for, the meetings of the Board of CONGO and its General Assembly.

3. Servicing the participation of non-governmental organizations in conferences convened by the United Nations

26. The Unit is responsible for the servicing of non-governmental organizations in regard to conferences convened by the United Nations. The mandate of the Unit to undertake the necessary arrangements for the participation of non-governmental organizations in consultative status at United Nations conferences convened by the Economic and Social Council stems from Council resolution 1296 (XLIV), paragraph 34. In practice, that mandate was enlarged in the past to include United Nations conferences convened by organs other than the Council. For the Unit this involves, first, coordinating with the relevant substantive department the procedure for invitation (including drafting the letters of invitation, procedures for responses and accreditations and ascertaining of visa requirements in the host country), which requires a considerable number of consultations and a considerable amount of drafting. The Unit must thereafter send the final letter of invitation to interested non-governmental organizations, communicating such information as visa and health requirements and location, and that concerning the programme organized for non-governmental organizations during the conference. The Unit must, of necessity, be involved in every step of the procedure, from the preparatory stages to servicing the non-governmental organizations at the conference itself.

27. The Unit is also called upon to deal with the participation of non-governmental organizations in consultative status during special and ad hoc sessions of the General Assembly whenever such participation is authorized.

C. The Unit's activity as a focal point within the United Nations Secretariat for matters relating to consultative status

28. The Non-Governmental Organizations Unit is concerned with, must monitor, and is the central repository for information on the activities of all the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The concerns of those organizations extend beyond the economic and social fields to all issues covered by the United Nations, for example, disarmament, drugs, humanitarian assistance, apartheid, Palestinian rights and chemical warfare. Practically, therefore, all substantive offices of the United Nations rely upon the Unit to provide information regarding non-governmental organizations in consultative status.

29. The same holds true for representatives of States Members of the United Nations who call upon the services of the Unit, very often to obtain information in reply to urgent queries from their capital. Those representatives therefore expect from the Unit immediate and accurate replies to questions that most of the time go beyond a concern with mere background information on non-governmental organizations and touch upon complex and

sensitive political and legal issues. The Unit also receives a great number of requests for provision of information from outside users such as journalists, educational institutions and the general public. This places heavy demands on the Unit, which must strive to maintain and update an individual file for each non-governmental organization; including a vast quantity of correspondence, magazines and publications.

30. The Unit is also the central repository for all information and precedents regarding the exercise of consultative status as well as the participation of non-governmental organizations in consultative status in the activities of all United Nations intergovernmental bodies.

II. CURRENT WORKLOAD AND STAFF RESOURCES

31. At its inception in 1947, the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit was composed of two Professional and two General Service staff members. In 1968, when the Economic and Social Council adopted its resolution 1296 (XLIV), which provided that the Secretariat should be so organized as to enable it to carry out the duties assigned to it concerning the consultative arrangements as set forth in that resolution, the level of resources of the Unit was the same although its workload had already increased considerably. In 1992, the level of resources of the Unit is still the same.

32. Yet the workload of the Unit has been increasing enormously and constantly over the years, not only through the increase in the number of non-governmental organizations that it services but also in the wide variety of activities that it finds itself involved with, which concern issues that go well beyond those covered by the Economic and Social Council. The documentation produced by the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit for consideration by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations has increased enormously. There has been a similar increase in the number of Member States, Secretariat offices and outside users requesting the services of the Unit.

33. Detailed information on increases in workload is provided below.

A. Increase in workload relating to the substantive secretariat of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

34. The volume of documentation processed by the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit for a given session of the Committee, which had been below 200 pages in the early days of the Organization, reached 2,000 pages for the 1991 session of the Committee. These figures reflect only the official documentation for the regular session of the Committee and do not take into account the various working papers or the informal inter-sessional papers (for example, working papers produced for the annual consultation or the Working Group). In this regard, it should be noted that the Unit benefited in 1988 from a generous donation of computer equipment from the Government of Sweden, which greatly facilitated the process of preparation of the Committee's documentation.

35. Regarding the applications for consultative status, in the past the Unit received an average of 30 requests per session. The number of applications for consultative status received by the Unit for each session of the Committee now averages 400. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the number of requests that have to be studied and screened by the Unit are not in any way reflected in the final number of applications processed by the Unit for consideration by the Committee. Consequently, the Unit has not been able to accede to the requests made, often forcefully, by applicant non-governmental organizations for person-to-person briefings and visits. The Unit must proceed through written correspondence since it is not able to devote to those personal briefings the minimum 400 work hours that would be required. In addition to the increase in formal requests for consultative status, there is also a constant increase in written and telephone inquiries for basic information on the procedures for obtaining consultative status. As the number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status increases, there is also a consequential increase in the number of requests submitted by those seeking reclassification to a higher category.

36. Regarding the quadrennial reports of activities submitted by non-governmental organizations in categories I and II, the number of non-governmental organizations required to submit such reports increased from 39 in 1948 to 395 in 1991.

37. The Committee, which originally had 5 members, now has 19 members, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1981/50 of 20 July 1981. This has resulted in an increase, both substantive and quantitative, in demands on the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. It should also be noted that an increasing number of States Members of the United Nations have been not only attending the sessions of the Committee as observers but also taking an active part in its deliberations. Thus, more assistance from the Unit has been required.

38. There has been a similar increase in the number of meetings serviced by the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. For example, during the period 1991-1992, in addition to the regular 1991 session of the Committee and the Committee's meetings held prior to sessions of the Council, the Unit serviced two annual consultations, in 1991 and in 1992; three meetings of the Working Group of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, in May 1991, July 1991 and April 1992; an informal working group on preparations for a round-table meeting on "Understanding the role of international non-governmental organizations"; and the round-table meeting itself, in 1992. During the same period, the Unit was also required to service several informal meetings of the Committee or of its Bureau.

39. The preparation of the documentation is only a part, albeit an essential one, of the work of the Unit as substantive secretariat of the Committee. Changes in the political climate in recent years have greatly influenced the work of the Committee, which is no longer a forum for political confrontation. The Committee's orientation has shifted towards more substantive and legal concerns. The relationship with the Secretariat has

grown closer; contacts have been more frequent and, in recent years, the Unit has experienced an increase in requests for extensive briefings from the Committee's members and other concerned States Members of the United Nations.

40. It should be noted that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations is not only a standing committee of the Economic and Social Council, but also the sole intergovernmental body entrusted with a mandate, stemming from the Charter itself, to deal specifically with non-governmental organizations. During the 1991 annual consultation between the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the non-governmental organizations in consultative status, 2/ Governments stressed the importance and uniqueness of the role of the Committee as the sole intergovernmental body dealing with non-governmental organizations in the United Nations and expressed the feeling that the Committee should interpret its mandate under Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) in a broader context and exercise it to the fullest extent possible. If the Committee is to do so, it is reasonable to assume that it may wish to consider issues ranging beyond the customary ones and may thus require additional reports from the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit.

41. The following tables show the increase in workload relating to the servicing of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

Table 1. Increase in volume of documentation processed by the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit

Year	Pages
1948	200
1991	2 000 a/

a/ Representing an increase of 900 per cent.

Table 2. Increase in the number of requests for consultative status

Year	Pages
1948	30
1991	400 a/

a/ Representing an increase of 1,230 per cent.

Table 3. Increase in the number of non-governmental organizations in categories I and II required to submit quadrennial reports

Year	Pages
1948	39
1991	395 a/

a/ Representing an increase of 913 per cent.

Table 4. Increase in the number of members of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

Year	Pages
1948	5
1991	19 a/

a/ Representing an increase of 280 per cent.

B. Increase in workload relating to the full implementation of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV)

42. The number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status increased from 41 in 1948 to 943 as of 1991. As a consequence, the workload regarding the servicing of the non-governmental organizations has increased exponentially, and this increase in volume is reflected in every aspect of the Unit's activities, be it the correspondence emanating from non-governmental organizations, requests for individual briefings, mailing of publications or accreditation services. As regards the last, the increase has been compounded by the fact that each non-governmental organization accredits an increasing number of representatives in order to follow the ever-expanding volume of activities and meetings taking place at United Nations Headquarters.

43. The following tables reflect the increase.

Table 5. Increase in the number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

Year	Category I	Category II	Roster	Total
1948	7	32	2	41
1991	41	354	533	943 a/

a/ Representing an increase of 2,200 per cent. It is expected that the number will reach over 1,000 after the 1993 session of the Committee.

Table 6. Number of accredited representatives of non-governmental organizations

Year	
1948	41 non-governmental organizations, involving approximately 100 representatives
1992	943 non-governmental organizations, involving approximately 2,000 representatives

Note: The increase in accreditation services is at least 1,900 per cent on the assumption that non-governmental organizations accredit only two representatives. In practice, a substantial proportion of non-governmental organizations accredit between 10 and 15 representatives, and several accredit as many as 20.

44. The Unit will be called upon to service forthcoming United Nations conferences, namely, the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the World Conference on Women in 1995. In this connection, it should be noted that the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights, at its second session, held at Geneva from 30 March to 10 April 1992, recommended that non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and

Social Council and with competence in the field of human rights and other non-governmental organizations that had participated in the work of the Preparatory Committee [or the regional meetings] might designate representatives properly accredited by them to participate as observers in the World Conference on Human rights, its Main Committees and, as appropriate, any of the committees or working groups, on questions within the scope of their activities (see document A/CONF.157/PC/37, annex II, decision PC.2/8, annex, rule 66). Furthermore, the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-sixth session, held at Vienna, from 11 to 20 March 1992, requested the Economic and Social Council to request the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to consider on a priority basis, in advance of the Fourth World Conference consultative status of more non-governmental organizations concerned with the advancement of women, with particular attention being given to applications from non-governmental organizations from developing countries, and further requested that the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations be provided with additional resources to deal with the additional work (see document E/1992/24, chap. I, sect. C, resolution 36/8, sect. A, para. 3).

C. Increase in workload relating to the Unit's role as focal point within the United Nations Secretariat for matters relating to consultative status

45. As noted earlier, the Unit is the recipient of requests for services and provision of information emanating from States Members of the United Nations, Secretariat officials, the United Nations system and outside users, and the staff is required to devote a significant amount of time to responding to inquiries and requests for extensive briefings. There has been a constant increase, qualitatively and quantitatively, in the demands made upon the Unit. For example, the number of States Members of the United Nations has increased from 55 to 178. The number of United Nations offices, programmes and specialized agencies utilizing the services of the Unit has expanded tremendously, as have the number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status on which information is likely to be requested and the range of activities in which they are involved. The services required from the Unit go well beyond the mere provision of factual information and also encompass guidance on legal and political matters.

46. In recent years, the increase in the activities and role of the non-governmental organizations has been much publicized in the media world wide, and this has given rise to a surge in interest from Governments, non-governmental organizations themselves and the public, thus increasing dramatically the workload of the Unit. Moreover, with the advent of democracy in many parts of the world, particularly in Eastern Europe, there has been a surge of requests from Governments in matters that go well beyond the consultative status strictly speaking and touch upon assistance and guidance regarding how to establish a non-governmental organization and draft its statutes, and the procedures for incorporation, in countries where there has been no past tradition of non-governmental organizations and the elaboration of legislation governing non-governmental organizations is still in its infancy.

III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

47. The present report has described the way in which the Unit's workload has increased over the years and the resources available to the Unit for carrying out its responsibilities. A discussion of this matter at the regular session of 1992 of the Economic and Social Council will be useful to the Secretariat in defining the most appropriate means for ensuring the effective functioning of the Unit.

Notes

1/ See document A/C.5/46/SR.21, paras. 109-110, 115 and 116 (statements by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Community, by Sweden on behalf of the Scandinavian countries and by Bulgaria).

2/ The report of the 1991 annual consultation will be issued as document E/C.2/1993/4.